

Background and structure of the ISST Forum

It has always been apparent to the ISST that we need to engage a broad cross-section of the NWS to successfully define and address the critical science issues related to IFPS/GFE. We have taken advantage of inviting topic-specific experts from both within and outside the NWS when discussing a particular topic and will continue to do so. In addition to this specific feedback sought out by the ISST, many groups and individuals have made the effort to provide valuable input to the team, which has been very helpful and much appreciated.

The ISST has established procedures to ensure field personnel (generally SOOs) and regional management are routinely informed and have an easy way to provide feedback to the ISST. However, for other groups within the NWS the procedures to engage the ISST have been more difficult to define and are more *ad hoc*. Fortunately, this exchange of ideas and information has been reasonably successful. To further enhance this dialogue, last year the ISST established periodic ISST Forums. There have now been several forums held, and while a teleconference with a large number of people is sometimes cumbersome and inefficient, they have been beneficial to the ISST and hopefully to the participants.

The forums are held occasionally (maybe 2 or 3 times a year) and serve to provide an update of the team's recent activities and progress. An open teleconference is announced to a broad list of interested parties including the development, training, and policy organizations within the NWS, as well as the Regions. Depending upon the discussion topics, additional experts might be invited to participate. During the forum, the ISST presents an overview of recent activities and then solicit ideas, feedback, and general discussion. Ideally this forum provides the ISST with much needed bottom-up, lateral, and expert feedback and guidance from all interested NWS colleagues while maintaining the efficient team structure. Furthermore, the forum promotes an open dialogue and increased awareness of the IFPS/GFE issues being discussed and those groups involved in their solutions.